

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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JACK DOYLE'S DAUGHTER.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON.

PART III. MISS DOYLE.

CHAPTER VIII. DEATH OR GLORY.

AND Stanislas! What in the name of heroic love was Phœbe to do now?

She was to start on Thursday, and well she knew why, and well she read in her father's voice and face a decree from which there was no appeal. Friday would come, and Stanislas would wait for her at the corner, and she would not come, and then—what would happen then? But it was not so much the chances of what the newspapers call double murder and suicide that troubled her, as the mean and cowardly part she felt herself to be playing. She did not ask herself why she had not more openly defied her father, because she had learned that he was not one to be openly defied. But surely there was some effective exit from the complication open to a girl whom paternal tyranny was tearing from her lover. "Oh, if I had never seen him!" thought she, and it was the most honest wish she had ever formed—the most honest that it made her ashamed of its honest treason to the man, whom dramatic duty and the whole fitness of things bade her love with all her heart and soul, if only because her love was thwarted and opposed. And Cautleigh Hall! She wished it had been a convent or a castle, but hall sounded well enough, and if it only had a moat, the situation would be complete indeed. Sir Charles Bassett would of course turn out to be some grim old feudal baron, with power to put refractory guests under lock and key. But then it was for her so to act, that these privileges should not be

thrown away upon a tame and spiritless creature who did nothing to deserve them.

One thing she could do, and that was to be as sullen as the days were just then. She could leave to Mrs. Hassock all the preparations for her journey, and affect no more interest in them than if they in no wise concerned her. The line of conduct proved much more difficult than she expected, because she really felt anything but sullen, while the prospect of her first journey into unknown regions excited her and interested her a great deal. But she had made up her mind that "Phœbe Doyle, a sullen young woman," was the description of her part, and she acted up to it as well as she was able, snubbing Mrs. Hassock at every turn, whenever there arose a question of clothes or packing, with an "I don't know," or an "It's all the same to me," which must have proved intensely aggravating to a lady's maid whose place was less worth keeping. Mrs. Hassock, however, unconscious of playing the part of duenna in a complicated drama, took Phœbe at her word, and did everything her own way. As for her father, he might have been made of granite for any effect that her new style of behaviour seemed to have upon him. He even spoke of her visit into Lincolnshire cheerfully, and as if she would find it a pleasant change. "Is he glad to be rid of me?" she asked herself, and forgot to answer that, if he were, he had plenty of cause.

By the time that Tuesday was half through, and only one whole day was left her wherein to make up her mind how she should communicate with Stanislas, and what she should say—for it is no light thing to write one's first real letter

to a great man and a hero, especially when no strong impulse finds the words—she had come to the conclusion that she must do something if she was ever to hold her head up before her looking-glass again. How would an elopement look, especially with forgiveness at the end? But then forgiveness did not seem suggested by such a father as hers. In short, she felt herself in a maze of helpless despair, such as few but children ever enter, when a letter was brought her a second time—and this time she knew the hand; and her father could not have seen this, for he had been out since breakfast-time.

"All is change!" it began. "As you love me, meet me, not on Friday, but to-day, to that corner, at Four.—A. I await, even now."

"Mrs. Hassock," exclaimed Phoebe; it was not Mrs. Hassock who had brought her this letter. "Mrs. Hassock, I can't go in my old waterproof to a Hall! It isn't fit to be seen. And there are all sorts of weather in the country, not a bit like——"

"India? No, miss. As for the waterproof, I'd have mentioned it myself, only you didn't seem to mind, so it wasn't for me to say."

"But I do mind. Of course I mind. It's not too late now. I can go and get one now, and be back by dinner-time. I shall be sure to find one that will fit me, somewhere."

"Why, she isn't the same girl," thought Mrs. Hassock, "that she was this minute ago. She didn't seem to care if her hat was crushed to ribbons; and now she must have a new cloak, or the world 'll come to an end. . . . And the rest of the packing, miss? Is there anything else particular you want done?"

"Oh, put in everything, anyhow," said Phoebe, with impolitic inconsistency, and darted off into her bedroom.

Phoebe got herself ready for walking at amazing speed, and was gone before Mrs. Hassock had time to put this and that together; and, when she did, nothing came. It was a good wholesome sign of returning moral health, when a girl took a sensible interest in sensible things. It was certainly rather foggy weather for a young lady to run her own errands, but in foggy weather she, who had once been Phoebe Burden, was at home, and had often run out, without even a bonnet, on worse days, as in the case of the candles. And the

mist was a godsend, for if she chanced to meet her father on the way to the appointed corner, and if he saw her, she knew very well that she would feel ready to sink into the ground. Had the letter come soon enough in the day to give her thinking time, she was by no means sure that she would have found the resolution to obey its summons. Happily for her heroism, it had come just when she wanted a directing impulse, and had not compelled her to pause. Now, at last, she could feel she was doing the right thing—escaping by stratagem from a father and a duenna, to a secret meeting with the hero who loved her. Even her fear was a delight in its way.

And there, sure enough, was Stanislas waiting for her under the gas-lamp at the corner. The mist was not thick enough to hide the long dark locks, the lean lank figure, and the sallow complexion of an Adrianski. He knew her too, for he came quickly forward and took her gloved hand in both of his own, which, being gloveless, looked raw and felt cold. She noticed that he was better dressed than of old, was cleaner shaved, and that he had, to his great improvement, given up the black strip of plaster which he had gained in her battle. Why did not her heart beat with joy at feeling her hand in his, at last, once more? Perhaps it was the fog—perhaps because his hands were really too damp and cold to make their grasp a pleasure. Nor did he, somehow, look quite so handsome as in the back-garden far away. Still, it was with herself that Phoebe felt disappointed, not with him.

"Ah, so you are come!" said he.

"Yes," said Phoebe.

It was not much to say, but it was her all. No; things were really not the same. The street-corner was not the back-garden, nor was Miss Doyle, the heiress, Phoebe Burden, nor was this man the Stanislas of whom she had dreamed.

"It is well," said her lover. "If you did not, there would be dreadful things. But I knew. I said to myself, 'You are Adrianski. You have the will of Mesmer. What you will, is done. You shall draw her, if you will, out of a brick wall.'"

He had certainly drawn her out of doors, she was bound to own; and if it was really by the power of his will, as his deep black eyes seemed to tell, then he had a fascination the more. Phoebe had always been deeply moved by those tales of mystery and sham-psychology, which glorify

what they call the will power and mystify young people into thinking themselves philosophers. But still, what was she to say? She ought to have felt herself in a seventh heaven; but she felt nothing of the kind, and wished she had not left her umbrella at home. Stanislas had none either. But then he had no feathers in his hat, so that it did not so much matter—for him.

"Mademoiselle," said Stanislas, "I did lay at your feet the heart and the sword of a brave man—of Stanislas Adrianski, in fine. You did pick them up, so to say, 'Stanislas, I am yours.' It was one evening, when I jump over the wall. Well, I watch; I wait; the days pass, and the weeks pass, and you never come. You are not ill—no, not even with joy. Simply, you go. I say, it is some mystery here; for that she does not love Adrianski—ah, say that to the pigs, but not to me. I take my violoncello on my back, and I go for a walk, like the *Trovatore*—the man which sings and plays. I take a theatre engagement—I, who am a nobleman in my own land. It is the bread of exile. But what would you? It is bread, after all. I change my lodge; for you are gone, and they are canaille. I am desperate. But an Adrianski is proud. He cannot stay to be vexed for rent so old he has forgotten. He is more proud because he is poor. I see you at 'Olga'—you! And with—"

"With my father," said Phœbe. "And indeed—indeed—"

"Ah! You are rich, mademoiselle; and I am—poor. I comprehend." He drew back, in proud humility, and sighed.

"I have told my father," said Phœbe eagerly; "I have told him that nothing—nothing like that would make any difference—none."

"You have told your father? He knows?"

"There—now you see if I have been false!" said she. She had been able to make so few points, that she could not afford to throw away the smallest chance of one.

"And what does he say—that rich Englishman?" He advanced again, and tried to recover her hand; but she managed to avoid his clasp this time. She could really believe that there was something magnetic, or mesmeric, or galvanic, or whatever the correct jargon is, about this lover of hers. He repelled her, even though she had told herself that she passionately loved him, and admired him above all the

men she had ever seen or ever would see. Raw damp hands cannot make a man the less a Count, a Hero, a Patriot, and a Pole.

"He said—no, you mustn't ask me what he said," said she; for her father's words had been of a sort to vulgarise the finest situation in the world. "But—I'm afraid—I'm certain, he does not approve."

"He will refuse the hand of an Adrianski! He should be more than prince, this milord! It is Adrianski who descends. But never mind; all right; we will see. It is not of this I come to say. Why do I see you to-day? Because, mademoiselle, because this night I leave London; because, it may be, I see you no more again."

Was it dread or hope, dismay or relief, that came over her in a wave?

"Leave—London?" faltered she.

"Yes; the theatre will change; they will have pantomime—an Adrianski does not play the jigs for a clown, a buffoon! But it is not that. I have told you I wait in my exile for what will be to come. My sword is in his sheath; it waits the word; the word comes, Draw! And out he comes."

"You mean, you are going to fight——"

"If it shall please the pigs, yes, mademoiselle. Meanwhile, I go to conjure—to conspire! I am called. No, not to you I say no more. But before many days you will hear a sound that shall shake the tyrant on his throne. It shall be the voice of the nation which will be heard. You will hear the music of the cannons, and will see the flashing of the swords, and the raining of blood; and in the middle of the battle you will hear the voice of Stanislas, and see the sword of Adrianski."

"And——"

"Yes. This night I part. Honour—glory—country, before all. I go to conspire! It may be, the fall of this head will be the sign of what shall begin. And it will be glad to fall; because you are rich, and I am poor."

Even she now forgot to notice that the mist was turning faster and faster into drizzling rain. She must send her heart to battle with this hero, that was clear.

"How can I make you believe? How can I tell you how miserable I have been—I am? How can I help you—what can I do?"

"It may be victory; it may be death; it may both—it shall be one. Make as if I am to die—for Poland; for you. Take my hand."

She could not refuse it now, and he held hers tightly.

"Say, 'Stanislas Adrianski, I love you; and I swear.'"

"You know I do——"

"Very good; that shall be that you swear. I am glad; I fear no more. And now for the pledge, the pawn, I will give you my own ring—it is cheap, but my jewels are not mine. And you will give me yours, which you will. And when you hear of the charge, you shall say, 'My ring was there!'"

There was assuredly some sort of power about the man; even his eloquence had a sort of gloomy vigour that covered the multitude of its sins. And how could she refuse what might be a doomed hero's parting prayer to the woman whom, next to honour, he adored—her first, last, only proof that she deserved his prayer? How could she bear to think of him, in the midst of secret dangers and open perils, fighting, worn out, perhaps wounded, flying, imprisoned, tortured—even slain, on the scaffold or on the field—and feel that, living, he misjudged her, and, dead, would never know what a heroine she meant to be?

I fear that to make a list of Phœbe Doyle's faults and follies, since she had become a lady, would take a long and sorry chapter. I am not her champion. She had been sly, sullen, rebellious, weak, wilful—I could easily think of a few more hard names to call her that good girls never deserve. But the light, though it had to find its way through sadly crooked chinks, flashed through her now and then, and I cannot help an instinct that it flashed through her now, though she was rebelliously meeting a forbidden lover by stealth, and though that meeting ended in her pulling off her glove and giving him what he asked for; something for nothing, like a fool; a troth-plight to the sham hero of a half-forgotten dream. I can picture some wise and noble woman, happening (as she may happen) to find in love her highest duty, driven to meet her knight by stealth, fired with zeal for some noble cause, and proud to think that her last gift will shine in its van—and such, in faith and belief, was Phœbe Doyle.

And so, bearing with him this token of her faith, and having pressed a long kiss upon her ungloved hand, Stanislas Adrianski departed to Poland—to death, it might be; to glory it must surely be. And

so Phœbe, half wet through, and thinking many things, went home.

Thursday morning came, and now that Stanislas had changed once more from a formidable fact back into a heroic ideal of whom she would be proud to dream, the prospect of new scenes and new people began to hold out their proper promise to a healthy mind. Her father, all through breakfast, wore a more cheerful air. He went with Phœbe and Mrs. Hassock to the station, and saw them off most amiably, though he rather surprised the house-keeper by letting his only daughter leave him for the first time without giving her a kiss at parting. Perhaps they were Indian manners, thought she, and though she had seen the usual signs of affection pass between Anglo-Indians, she knew that India is a large place, and contains, no doubt, a variety of customs.

"But—miss! Your new waterproof! If we haven't left it behind, I declare!"

Phœbe felt herself turn as hot as fire, and colour up to the eyes.

"I never got it after all," said she. "I dare say the old one will do very well."

"Yes, miss. Thinking you'd no more use for it, I thought it would be a pity not to wear it out, so I thought I'd do it myself, sooner than waste a thing, which is sinful at the best of times. But, of course, you're welcome to it, as you've changed your mind. I've noticed how ladies from India are rather apt to change their minds. But it was a pity you went out in the wet for nothing. Your clothes were just as if you'd been walking about—all alone."

"I'd rather you would keep it, Mrs. Hassock," said Phœbe with a fainter flush, but a more guiltily conscious one. "I don't want one at all."

So Mrs. Hassock put this and that together again with more success than before.

The train met with no accident, so the journey from London to Quellsby, the nearest station to Cautleigh, was a necessarily uneventful one. Not even such a novice in travelling as Phœbe can get any new ideas or sensations worth mentioning from a journey in a railway train. The fields, villages, churches, and stations ran past one another in no more remarkable manner than they pass along the much-more-wonderful railroad that runs through Phœbe's native land of dreams, and though Cockneys profess to find the

country delightful, at least for a little while, I never heard of one who found its features strange. To leave London always feels like going home. It was far more exciting when the train stopped at Quellsby, an exceedingly small station, and when a footman came up to the carriage-door, and, touching his hat, enquired for Miss Doyle. This was a touch of life, for the footman was undeniably real—the most real thing she had seen since she saw her father waving his hand from the platform.

The carriage, with its pair of horses, its coachman and footman, were all that had come to meet her; but Phoebe was impressed, and Mrs. Hassock not dissatisfied with the respect paid at the station to ladies who arrived as guests at Cautleigh Hall. If Phoebe had anticipated great things from the country, she was doomed to disappointment; if she looked forward to romantic misery, she was destined to the satisfaction of her heart's desire. The seven miles from Quellsby to Cautleigh were as flat and ugly as a Dutchman would wish to see, and mainly ran through moist meadows with unpicturesque curves of wold beyond them. But Cautleigh is a pleasant old-fashioned hamlet enough, with its ancient church and its scattered cottages buried among trees. The winter sun was feebly setting, and the rooks were cawing their last word for the day, as the carriage passed the lodge-gates, and rolled smoothly along the level park drive. Phoebe was really impressed, and was shy of speaking even to Mrs. Hassock, feeling instinctively, as any woman would, that to seem impressed by such things looks ignorant and unbecoming. At last, the long avenue having been passed, the carriage drew up before the Hall itself—a new-old mansion, partly white and partly red, square, ugly, very convenient, and very large, with a terraced flower-garden in front and on one side, and a pleasant vision of fruit-walls and hothouses beyond, while the park, bounded by now bare plantations, stretched round on every side. It was cold and misty, and the afternoon was failing into twilight, so that the place looked sad and sombre, but full of dignity, and with a promise of infinite comfort within. And this, at last, was Cautleigh Hall, the principal character in this history, and yet never seen until now.

The hall bell clattered and clanged. The door opened. A young man—Phoebe remembered his face at the play-house—

came out with a couple of dogs at his heels. He raised his hat.

"Miss Doyle?" said he. "Welcome to Cautleigh, with all my heart! I'm Ralph Bassett, you know. Mr. Ralph Bassett—Miss Doyle. Our fathers were old friends, so we must be young ones. That's all your luggage? Here, Stanislas, lend a hand for the small things."

A man-servant, in plain black clothes, had followed Ralph Bassett from the door. He came forward, to take from the carriage such small things as parasols and shawls. How odd that he should answer to his name! Phoebe looked at him for that very reason. And she saw—

Stanislas Adrianski!

SOMETHING ABOUT SIGNATURES.

I AM not sure that a man's character is not indicated by his "Yours etc.," even more than by the contents of his letter. I speak, of course, of the ending to a friendly letter; for in a mere letter of business a man must be conventional, or he would be looked upon as too lively to be trusted. But in a letter of friendship, I think that a man's "subscription"—I believe that is the right word for his ending—is the real keynote to his character, and to his care for you; for in the manner of penning it, as well as in the choice of words, may be found volumes of intention, or of listlessness. I shall name half-a-dozen of my friends or acquaintances, who have vindicated this view of letter signatures; and who have added to my enjoyment (save when they have recklessly detracted from it) through from ten to thirty years of correspondence.

Horace Stapleton, who is really not a bad fellow, and whom I have known, perhaps, for twelve or fourteen years, used at one time to write to me "Yours sincerely;" and he wrote it very legibly, as if he meant it. We were never great friends, but only kindly acquaintances, having met more in business than in intimacy. Now it was at the close of the year 1878 that I received a letter from this estimable gentleman, which caused me to rub my eyes with astonishment. It was signed, "Your obedient servant." I knew the horrid meaning of those words. I have invariably observed that the more "obedient" a man is in the tone of his epistolary signature, the more you may conclude that he has hostile intentions, or at the best that

he is profoundly indifferent. This is all the more true when your "obedient servant" has been in the habit of signing himself, "Yours sincerely." That a man who has been "sincere," should on a sudden become "obedient"—downright servile in the tone of his subscription—argues certainly that he intends to be offensive, if indeed he does not purpose to quarrel with you. In this particular instance my estimate of such obedience was justified by what immediately followed. It so happened that I published my work on Gyneocracy; or, *Hen Pecking Philosophically Considered*, on the same day when I received this horrid letter; and I hoped that the reviewers would speak highly of that work, and even pronounce it the great work of the year. Now, Horace Stapleton is by profession a literary man, and occasionally writes reviews of new books. To my vexation and disgust he reviewed my Gyneocracy with a gay, yet malignant vituperation. He seemed to jump on the top of it, and to smash it. He even said that "there were parts of it which were readable—those parts which were, perhaps, written by some lady." This was the criticism of his "obedience;" this was the servility of my "servant." The whole review showed an animus against myself and my writings, which was consistent with such genuflectory attitude. We are good friends again now (his signatures are once more Christian), and I doubt not that when I publish my next book, "Yours sincerely" will be found to run through all his eulogy. Still, one can never quite get over the painfully chilling effect of having been once even the object of obedience. The remembrance of it makes one nervous about the future. It seems to forecast the possibility of yet another postal fragment in which rigidity may blot the final page. It even makes one open every letter with distrust. However, it does not do to be too sensitive. I am bound to say that Horace Stapleton, in all his recent communications, has written "Yours sincerely" most plainly; giving attention to his pot-hooks, and rounding his vowels, in a way that shows earnestness of will.

Tom Spasm, who is of no particular profession, and who writes to me, on an average, once a fortnight, has this delightful eccentricity of habit: that he never—not even by an accident—signs two of his letters in the same way. I have known him for twenty years; and I can conscientiously affirm that, during the

whole of that time, he has never repeated himself in signature. The most spontaneous and gushing of characters, unfettered by conventionalism or propriety, strictly moral, beyond all question, and most exemplary, but "infrenate" in the sense of being original, Tom Spasm has a fascinating habit of being himself and not somebody else. His argument as to signatures is of this kind; he says that when you write to a friend you should discard mere formality as unfriendly. If you sign yourself, he has said to me, with some grooved and rutted formula, such as a stranger or a new acquaintance might use, "you imply that you mean to imply nothing" beyond the necessities of decorous amenity. Your signature should be always the highest compliment to the individuality of the person to whom you write. You should not treat him as if he were of the herd, and could not appreciate the delicacy of invention; but you should sign yourself so as to convey the impression that your mutual sympathies are exceptional. Again, says Tom Spasm, it is obvious that every signature should be harmonious with the spirit of a letter; and that for a man to be effusive through several pages of note-paper, and then suddenly to become conventional at the close, is an offence against the congruities of the intellect, equally with those of the heart. Accordingly Tom Spasm is spasmodic. He rushes into the full swing of vitality just where most men pull up as if they were shot. His signature is the soul of his letter. It is the climax, the final burst, of his written mind. I always turn first to the end. From the end I conclude the whole tenor of that enjoyment which I am about to derive from four sides.

"Yours faithfully" is not an assurance of signature to which I attach much importance. One of the best men I know, Herbert Longley, always writes to me, year after year, "Yours faithfully." He seems to be timid about suggesting the possibility that he could ever be changeful in his relations. I have said to him: "My dear Longley, if you could vary your signature, so as to admit that there may be other graces besides faith, I should find it a relief to my accustomedness. I am bound to admit that the word 'faithfully' is an adverb which has no legitimate degrees of comparison. 'More faithfully,' or 'most faithfully,' would be inaccurate; since *fidem fallere* even once would be fatal; and to be more faithful than faithful

is impossible. But, on the other hand, to reassert what you have asserted two hundred times seems to suggest the question-ability of the unquestionable. Of course, my dear Longley, you are faithful. But why keep on perpetually telling me so? I shall begin to think that you have stereotyped your care for me; and that I need not value it because it never changes." But how can you argue with a "practical man," who is sternly yet splendidly ingenuous, and who never drinks anything but water? Herbert Longley is as faithful to sweet temperance as he is to the pure waters of friendship.

Now do not write to me "Yours etc.," I entreated of that young gentleman whose acquaintance I made down at Margate. What on earth is "etc.?" Is it haste, which is disrespectful; or want of thought, which is silly; or want of interest, which is ungracious; or rank laziness, which is whippable? The next time you write to me "Yours etc.," I will return you the Latin fragment in an envelope, and make you write it out at full length. I wonder what gender you will put it into? "Et cetera" will be a neutral tag of sentiments, which you are quite welcome to keep to yourself. "Et ceteræ" will be languid in suggestiveness, or wanting in the robustness of esteem. I would rather you put "ceterum," or "cetero," which, if it meant anything, would mean "henceforth." And, again, why will you abbreviate your words, in that odiously infinitesimal way? "Yrs," as you love to subscribe yourself, is only three-fifths of a possessive pronoun. It is the limited liability of professed esteem. And so, too, with the beginnings of your letters. "My dr.," instead of "My dear." If you cannot "dear" me in four letters, leave it alone. Positive, dear; comparative, dr.; superlative, d., is a mode of declension which is subversive. I would much rather you put nothing at all. Oh, young men—and even old men—may you be etcetera'd before I will answer your economised scribbings.

I have, however, two original friends, who mightily please me by their digressions. First, there is my old friend, Will Maynard, who never puts any subscription—that is, he never puts any to me, though I assume he treats strangers with formality. His argument is at least captivating, if not sound. He says: Why should you write as a friend through four sides, and then conclude by insisting that you are a friend; or why should you affirm that you are

"Yours sincerely" in a letter, any more than you would affirm it in conversation? You do not meet your best friend at a club, and salute him with "Yours sincerely, my dear Smith;" so why should you keep on saying it because you write, and after you have proved it by your writing? So Will Maynard never puts any subscription, but abruptly appends his whole name. My second original friend, Harry Playflower, not only never puts any subscription, but never signs even his name or his initials. His argument is in advance of Will Maynard's, or rather, it is an extension of the same plea; for he says that the whole charm of a friendly letter is in the knowledge of the friend from whom it comes; and that to suppose that your familiar, who rejoices in your sympathies, and who is the "dimidium" of your inmost soul and fancy, can want to be told who you are—after he has read you through three or four sides—is to cast doubt on the exquisiteness of the relations which is the very joy of epistolary interchange. I like mad people, when they are clever; and both these friends are as clever as they are frisky. I must, however, mention a third friend, who is also indubitably insane, but in the direction of valedictory verbosity. I should preface that he is sixty-five years of age. When he writes me a letter, he always covers the last side with what reads like an interminable subscription. Here is one of his recent adieux: "Ever, my dear friend, with increasing regard and esteem, and with a degree of interest in your welfare which I assure you that I am not able to express, most truly, and affectionately yours; and this, too, not only in the formal senses of those words, but in their inner and deeper signification," and so on, through several lines more.

In the City, men have a way of subscribing their letters as if they took down their subscriptions out of pigeon-holes: "We remain, dear sirs, your faithful and obedient servants, Brown, Jones, Smith, and Co." And then—which is the most painful part of all—you can see that the letter has been copied, so that it may be referred to in the event of a row. I have one City friend—and a dear kind old gentleman he is—whose writing is always faint from being copied; and high up in one corner is "No. 4,768," showing that I have been carefully indexed. As he never writes to me except to say kind things, I cannot imagine why he should number his letters.

Then there is my friend Walter de

Million, the rich banker, palatially mansioned in Lombard Street, who writes a beautiful, clear, prosperous hand, a hand which suggests accuracy in book-keeping, and which makes you feel: "If I should overdraw my account, that senior partner will hear of it in two seconds." De Million is a nice Consol'd-looking man, with a sort of smooth-incombed expression about the mouth; and his boots show that his brougham is carpeted, and his hat has never a hair out of its place. Whenever De Million writes to me, he signs himself persistently, "Yours truly," and never permits himself the luxury of a superlative. Now, I must confess that this "truly" annoys me. It is the hovering between formality and friendship. It keeps clear of the banking-counter and the cash-book, but it has nothing of the private room or back parlour, where I have seen the wretch drawing his big cheques. If he were to sign himself, even once, "Yours most truly"—and we were capital friends both at school and at college—I should have hopes that he would double his clerks' salary, who, I am told, would not object to the increase.

And this reference to City clerks reminds me of a peculiarity which I have not unfrequently noticed in their (City) letters. Underneath their own names, or what is called the sign manual, there comes a wild and epileptic sort of flourish, which is evidently put there for the indulgence of the imagination, and as a relief after the stilted business letter. It is the only bit of originality at their command. They are so utterly sick to death of "Dear sir-ing" and "Obedient servant-ing," that they try to find consolation in appending a lean serpent, with two spikes drawn across it obliquely. And this habit is so formed that, even in private communications, they are apt to treat their best friends to the finale. I have one youthful friend in Mincing Lane, aged nineteen, who writes to me the most admirable letters, but invariably with the serpent and the spikes, and sometimes the serpent will trail its tail all down the page, as though it would wag it to show that it is pleased.

But what annoys me, whenever I get a "business letter" (that is, a letter from some emporium or some counting-house), is that one man writes the letter, and the subscription, and another man writes only the signature. Now this makes the subscription look unmeaning. The clerk knows that it is meant to be unmeaning.

That is its definite object and purpose. And, I suppose, it is as good as any other. Besides, how can you write to a man about business—a man whom you never saw and never wish to see—and put any subscription which can mean more than this: "My sentiments are in the ratio of your payments." The proper subscription to the letter of any man of business would be, "Yours pecuniarily," or "Yours get the better of you-ingly," or "Yours within the confines of legitimate felony," or "Yours extractingly, evisceratingly, vivisectionally." "Business" being the art of transferring other peoples' money out of their possibly paid for pockets into your own, it is obvious that its literature should be expressive of its objects, and its subscriptions neatly attuned to gentle theft. "Your obedient servant" is simply absurd, if not offensive, when addressed to a man you want to rob. "Sir, I regret that I cannot consent to your terms, and, therefore, our correspondence can cease. Your obedient servant." Very obedient! It is like writing, "I have the honour to remain," as a pompous wind-up to a proud letter, which has intimated, by thinly-veiled contempt, that you think your correspondent your inferior. "Mr. Smith presents his compliments to Mr. Brown, and begs to decline his acquaintance," would not be more incongruous, in the juxtaposition of clauses, than "I won't: Your obedient servant." But then, how are you to express the idea, nil? If we were to make it bad form to use conventional expressions, or to repeat any subscription used before, we should have to endow men—and women—with imagination and with time, to an extent which would recast human life. As a rule, women are more original than men—less fettered by dry rules of conventionalism; but this is because they write few letters about business, and many letters of friendship or love. Ah! love-letters. Now let us ask this appropriate question—appropriate to the endings of private letters—does emotion aid the head in composition? I should say most emphatically it does not. Take the example I have named—the most extreme of illustrations: the subscriptions to women's—or men's—love-letters. Two or three warm superlatives, of erotic signification, with a noun or two of glowing mutuality, and there is an end of the vocabulary. Thus the copia verborum of the heart is not one page out of the dictionary of the head. The explanation I

take to be this : Emotion does not think, it only feels ; whereas friendship feels chiefly because it thinks.

Yet the principal drawback to the thinking letters of thinking men — so far as the subscriptions to their letters is concerned—is that there is generally an obvious study of the fitness of subscription, which mars its spontaneity and grace. You can almost feel the half-second of pause and consideration which has preceded the subscription selected. There is an eclectic mood and style about the writing of it. A quarter of a second more, and that “sincerely” might have had a “most,” or that “faithfully” might have been supplanted by “Yours ever.” It was a toss up whether superlative should have its play. Now I think that a good letter-writer will end a letter to a friend, so as to make the end seem like the grip of a kind hand. There will be the avoidance of mere formulæ, or of scrawl, which make an end read like, “I suppose I must put something.” Yet this “something” is generally put for the “real thing.” Just as some men shake hands with you as if it cost fourpence to do it, or as if their whole nature wore kid gloves, so some men sign their letters as if the choice of a subscription had involved them in expenditure or in bore. Such an ending can give a reader no pleasure. Heaven knows what is that gift we call instinct, by which we penetrate the inner thought of written words. Yet so it is, that not what a man writes gives us pleasure, but the unexpressed and invisible sentiment of the writer. Now the sublime art of giving pleasure by spontaneous mutuality is not a gift which is common to all mankind. It must be born in a man’s nature or it is impossible. I have received letters, with but an ordinary ending, which have made my heart thrill with gratification ; and I have received letters, with voluminous assurance, which have produced no more effect than flakes of snow. Is this because we know the writers’ natures ? Yes ; but it is also because the one has spontaneity, and the other has no soul but pen and ink.

I must mention one more friend, who has a theory about subscriptions for which I think there is something to be said. I shall not give his real name, because he is a sensitive fellow ; and also for another reason I will presently tell. I will, however, try to describe his handwriting. If a spider in convulsions were to crawl into an inkpot, and then crawl over four sides

of note-paper, it would produce the same character of caligraphy as my excellent friend, say, “J. W.” Now J. W. argues that a subscription to a (friendly) letter ought to be, on principle, hard to read ; because if you leave it an open question whether you are affectionate or obedient, true, faithful, sincere, or attached, you necessarily stimulate enquiry, and, therefore, interest, and so compel your puzzled friend to care about you. On the same principle, he will argue that all the handwriting in a (friendly) letter ought to be just a trifle mysterious, because mystery has a charm for deep thinkers, and because the pleasure of reading a letter is so transient, and even momentary, when you can gallop through the lines and through the thoughts. It will be seen that J. W. is not primarily a man of business ; indeed, he is not in any business at all ; which is a happy fact for other persons besides himself. Still, J. W. has a spirit of observation, which he has put to the following novel account. (And now it will be seen why a feeling of delicacy has prevented my giving his real name.) He has been making a collection, during the last fifteen years, of what he calls, “epistolary good-byes.” He has strung together three hundred and twenty-seven signatures—or rather, subscriptions, or modes of saying farewell. He has headed these good-byes with seven distinct titles, corresponding to their care or intensity—the offensive the evasive, the formal, the complimentary, the friendly, the affectionate, the amorous. There is also an appendix—to me the most interesting—which bears the pleasant title, “The Insane.” J. W. is going to publish this collection ; and he will publish it in his own name—which is a grand one. Epistolary Good-byes, will be found shortly at Mudie’s, and will, I doubt not, be devouringly run upon.

A BREACH OF PROMISE.

A STORY IN ONE CHAPTER.

THERE is a good deal of excitement in Bodmington to-day. It seems to be in the air, and the air gets into everything and every place. Bodmington is ordinarily restful, not to say monotonous. But it generally casts off sloth and bestirs itself on market-days, when it puts on a most festive and fascinating appearance for the benefit of the neighbouring farmers and their wives and daughters, who are wont to declare that there is more life in

Bodmington than in any other place they can name.

But to-day, though it is market-day, the prevalent excitement must strike the most unobservant as being something quite extraordinary and out of the common. There is quite a concourse of people assembled together at Berringer's, the chief confectioner's; the market-place is alive with animated groups who are not discussing the prices of crops and cattle; and Miss Mowbray's show-rooms are filled to overflowing.

Indeed, Miss Mowbray, the popular and tasteful little milliner, may be said to be the centre of attraction this day. She can tell more about this astounding approaching wedding, the mere rumour of which has thrown Bodmington off its balance, than anybody else, for she is confidently reported to be making the wedding-dress, some even say the whole trousseau.

She is a delightful little woman this popular little milliner, quite as pretty and charming as she was ten years ago, when she came and took the taste of Bodmington by storm in the capacity of show-woman in Mrs. Mayne's (her predecessor's) shop. A bright sweet-faced little woman of thirty-five or thereabouts, gifted with a lively voice, and endowed with an exquisitely graceful figure and way of carrying herself.

During these ten years which she has passed here, she has become quite a local power, and has more than doubled the already good business to which she succeeded on the death of her old employer, Mrs. Mayne. No dress is well reputed in Bodmington and its vicinity unless it has Miss Mowbray's indisputable stamp upon it. And the "best worn" bonnets at the local races, the "best worn" flowers at the local balls, must be arranged by Miss Mowbray, or they are regarded as worse than useless—they are actually vulgar!

She has attained this just celebrity, not only on account of "prompt attention to your highly esteemed favours," which all tradespeople pledge themselves to give, but on account of a certain sweet, blithe, gentle dignity which marks her as a gentlewoman even in the eyes of those least accustomed to the article. All—or nearly all—her customers like her, and are interested in and sympathetic with her, though they know absolutely nothing at all about her beyond this, that she lives in Bodmington and makes lovely bonnets.

But to return to the abnormal excitement which is prevailing at Bodmington to-day.

The cause of it is being fully discussed in Miss Mowbray's show-room by an eager and animated group of country ladies, who would, one and all, gain more information on the all-absorbing topic, if they were not so desirous of seeming to be able to afford a little in return.

"I couldn't have believed it possible that the first I should hear of Beatrice Alleyne's marriage would be in Berringer's shop, instead of from her own lips," buxom little Mrs. Harcourt says in aggrieved tones. "We were schoolfellows for years, and she was bridesmaid, and now I hear of her approaching marriage for the first time from strangers, who can't even tell me the name of the man."

"It's very close and underhand of Beatrice."

"It's not what I should have expected from her father's daughter; all the world was welcome to know what he did, dear old man. There was no concealment about him, but Beatrice takes after her mother, who was a nasty dark foreign-looking woman. I always say that Mrs. Alleyne's stand-off ways lost her husband the election the last time he stood. Bodmington would never have turned him out, if his wife had shown a more friendly spirit to the neighbourhood."

All the while this conversation is going on between her patronesses, Miss Mowbray is silently occupied in arranging some winter floral decorations in Mrs. Harcourt's bonnet.

This work of art accomplished, to the satisfaction of its owner, she appeals to Miss Mowbray, no longer fearing to distract the artist's attention till her own cause is served.

"They say you are making the whole of the trousseau. Is that true, Miss Mowbray?"

"Quite true, madam."

"Oh, then you can tell me more about it. Who is the gentleman, and what is his name?"

"These flowers a little more to the edge of the brim! Yes, madam. His name is Littleton."

"It's a very sudden affair, isn't it?"

"Miss Alleyne told me two months ago to prepare her trousseau, and ordered a handsome one. She evidently did not wish to have it talked about so long before, therefore I never mentioned it. But this

morning she came in, saying all the world might know it now, it was so near; and then she told me the gentleman's name."

"Will they live here? Is he rich? Has he a place of his own?"

These, and countless other questions, are poured in upon Miss Mowbray with almost ferocious velocity. But the well-bred little milliner does not allow herself to be overwhelmed by them. Calmly and quietly she answers each one in her due and appointed season, satisfying them perfectly by her manner, and leaving them to discover by-and-by that her matter has been very insufficient for their needs and desires.

Meanwhile those who have remained in the market-place and streets are faring much better, for Miss Alleyne takes her walks abroad in the afternoon through the most public places, and those who know her well enough to stop and speak find that she has put away all reticence on the subject of her marriage now.

"Yes," she confesses, "she had wished it to be kept quiet till it drew very near, for she dreaded interference from some members of her family. Mr. Littleton disliked hearing himself talked about; but now all the world was welcome to know that she was to be married next week, and that she and her husband would come back after the honeymoon and live at Bodmington Place."

"That looks as if he had no estate of his own," some of her friends conjecture as they congratulate the young owner of the pretty little estate which gives her a position among the landed gentry of the county.

But Beatrice is too happy to give a thought to their possible conjectures, or to the way in which these latter may cast a slur on the fortunes of the man whom she has enthroned in her heart.

Later in the day, when Miss Mowbray's show-rooms are comparatively deserted, Beatrice runs in to look at her wedding-dress.

A wooden frame, shaped like a headless woman, supports the snowy fabric of satin and lace as gracefully as a wooden frame can, and as the bonnie-faced brunette who is to wear it so soon stands contemplating it, the womanly desire to get and give sympathy on this sweetest of all subjects seizes her.

"Miss Mowbray," she exclaims, speaking in that quick piquant way which she has inherited from her half-Irish, half-

Spanish mother, "how is it that you, who are so—oh, ever so much prettier and more charming than I am—have not found anyone to insist upon your loving him and giving yourself up to him, as Guy Littleton does me?"

The girl—spoilt little darling of circumstances as she is—has quick perceptions and an intensely affectionate heart. Now, the moment she has uttered her thoughtless words, she bitterly repents herself of them, for Miss Mowbray's fair gentle face quivers. The nerves of it seem almost convulsed with pain. However, she recovers herself so readily, that Beatrice has no excuse for remarking upon the temporary emotion.

"If I had been fortunate as you are, Miss Alleyne, I should not be making your wedding-dress now, and as you are good enough to say I have made it better than anyone else would have done, why, we are both well satisfied, I hope, with things as they are."

"I want to ask a favour of you," Beatrice says impulsively, wheeling round. "My aunts and cousins are coming to my wedding, of course, but they don't much like the idea of my marriage, and so I don't want to have them buzzing about me in the morning before I go to church. They will be too much taken up, moreover, with their own dresses and appearance to give a thought to me. There is no one I should so much like to have with me at that time as you. Will you come and dress me? I have neither mother nor sister. Will your kind hands give the finishing touches to the last dress Beatrice Alleyne will ever wear?"

"You dear little pathetic pleader, yes," the other one responds instantaneously.

Then she remembers that she is no longer known to the world as Admiral Mowbray's daughter Ida, but merely to the Bodmington section of it as the estimable and pretty little milliner, Miss Mowbray.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Alleyne," she adds hurriedly, "I forgot for a moment that we—I mean that I—I mean"—this very resolutely—"that I shall like to dress you on your wedding-day very much indeed, for I'm going to leave Bodmington, and I shall like to feel that you are the last person I decked out."

"You are going to leave Bodmington?" Beatrice cries, aghast; "and I shall be vilely dressed by someone else, and Guy will be disgusted with my looks. No, no, Miss Mowbray, unless you're going 'to

marry and be happy ever after,' as I am, you know, you mustn't leave Bodmington."

As Miss Alleyne says this, she is flitting from frounce to flower, and Miss Mowbray is saying to herself:

"Idiot that I am; it most likely is another Guy Littleton all the time, and I am disturbing my hardly attained peace for nothing."

"Well," she says aloud, cheered by her own view of things for the moment, "since you will have it so, and since I don't suppose I should ever like another place as well, I'll promise not to leave Bodmington."

"And you'll promise to dress me on my wedding-day," Beatrice says, and then they become absorbed in far weightier matters, such as the colour and cut of the travelling costume, and the advisability of having moveable fan-shaped trains made to button on some of the superior short skirts.

Bodmington Place is crowded in the course of a few days after this with a formidable army of uncles, aunts, and cousins, not one of whom knows anything of the man who is going to carry off their niece and cousin, the little heiress of Bodmington Place, and each one of whom is consequently disposed to believe the worst about him that may be imagined of man.

It is true that up to the present time they have nothing definite to allege against him beyond the fact that he is a stranger to them. Being, as a family, of great importance to themselves and one another, they find it hard to forgive anything like ignorance of all concerning themselves on the part of an outsider. Unfortunately, ostrich-like, they forget that the ignorance may be on their own side, not on that of the offending other one. And so they tell each other in low tones that they hope for the best, of course, but expect the worst from a man who has made dear Bee's acquaintance through any other medium than the proper family one.

Meanwhile the little bride-elect goes on her way rejoicing, and is buoyantly and unconcernedly regardless of the warnings they waft towards her, and the endless way they have of going on craftily suggesting unhappy terminations to this good time she is having.

"No; she knows nothing of Guy Littleton's family, and very little of his fortunes beyond this (to her) utterly unimportant fact that the latter are as poor as they well can be; but he himself is a

darling, a king among men! fine and tall, and full of wit and valour. Very probably they"—the uncles and aunts and cousins—"will see nothing in him; they are not educated up to the point of appreciating and delighting in his vast superiority to themselves."

These, and many other similar ones, are the comments Beatrice makes to herself often, and occasionally to Miss Mowbray, anent the coming man, and the attitude her relations are prepared to assume towards him.

As the day of his destiny approaches, Mr. Littleton grows daily less and less deserving of the love and loyal confidence which Beatrice Alleyne is giving him. He has left the friends' house at which he met and won the bonnie Bee, and gone to Southsea, where he is always tolerably sure of meeting a number of old messmates and friends.

He is a naval surgeon, and he has won and deserved many professional "plums." He is very popular with men while he is with them, for he has unflagging spirits in society, and a fund of humour that is a very good thing to draw upon during a long cruise. But when he has left them for any time they say to one another that "he was a queer fish," and seem to have a keener recollection of his eccentricities and peculiarities than of his better, or even more popular, qualities.

In very truth he is a "queer fish," a far queerer one than any of them know or even imagine. For all his bonhomie and high spirits in society, he is a suffering and a haunted man; a man haunted by a horrible dread.

At divers times during his past life this awful gruesome dread has attacked and routed him, upsetting his best resolutions, sweeping away his mastery over himself, nearly destroying his social and professional prospects. Ah, he will never forget the day when the dread was stronger upon him than ever it had been before or since! till now—now on the eve of his wedding-day with Beatrice Alleyne, it is growing, growing hourly; it is stronger than ever!

As in a dream, he finds himself using the same arguments to himself, writing the same letters, doing the same to hide his flight, as he did on a former occasion.

He cannot marry, he will not marry! Who is there powerful enough in all the world to make him marry? Rather than do it he will cut the service and bury himself alive. Poor little Beatrice, why had he

let her beauty and sweetness lure him into this direful difficulty?

So to happy Beatrice, defiant of all family opposition in her love and confidence, the cruel post bears a letter written apparently by an iron hand in the coldest blood.

"A conviction that I am doing the best thing for us both in writing to tell you that I shall never see you again, instead of coming to claim you as my bride, has taken possession of me. Marry some luckier and worthier fellow, and believe me when I tell you that you are well rid of
GUY LITTLETON."

Beatrice receives this letter on her wedding-day, as her wedding-dress is being buttoned on to her by Miss Mowbray.

The stab is too sudden, too sharp, she cannot bear the anguish of it in silence. With a scream her poor loving arms go out and cling to the one from whom she is surest of sympathy, to Miss Mowbray, the milliner.

"Oh, my heart, my heart! break at once and kill me!" the poor girl wails, and then she falls frightened and half-senseless, and some of the aunts and cousins strive to "bring her to" by reminding her that "they have always said it, and always thought it."

But Miss Mowbray soon clears the room of these well-meaning ones, and proceeds to offer sharp restoratives.

"Hush!" she says; "don't wish your heart to break and kill you; your heart will do yourself and others good service yet. Let us look at this together. We shall both see it in the same light."

"No, no, no; you never knew Guy Littleton—you never learnt to think it impossible for him to lie to a woman who loved him," Beatrice cries, and for answer Miss Mowbray takes a well-worn letter from her pocket, and Beatrice reads it, and sees that it is almost word for word like the one she has just received, and that it is signed by the same man.

Then, strung up by the indignation she feels that any other woman has the same right she has to lament a wrecked love, and loathe the same wrecker, Beatrice sits down in her wedding-dress and listens to what Miss Mowbray has to tell her.

"It is just eleven years ago that this same thing happened to me," Miss Mowbray begins; "my father had just hoisted his flag at Reymouth when I came out at one of the garrison balls, and being the

admiral's daughter, and young and fresh in those days, I made what they told me was a sensation. At that ball I met Mr. Littleton, he was an assistant-surgeon then, and from the time I met him I never ceased to think of him, and he never ceased his exertions to get appointed to the flag-ship.

"He succeeded at last, and soon made himself a favourite on board with everyone, especially with my dear old father. I was living with an aunt in lodgings in the town, and it came at last to be an understood thing that, when my father came to dine with us quietly, he should bring Mr. Littleton with him in preference to any of the other officers. Very soon we became engaged, and my father gave his consent freely, to everyone's surprise, for they thought he ought to have been more ambitious for me. But he thought Guy Littleton a man among men, and you may be sure I did the same.

"I don't think any girl could have been happier in her engagement than I was: it was a period of perfect poetry written in the smoothest rhyme. He treated me not only as his love and idol, but as his intellectual equal and companion, and made me believe that he should be as proud of his wife as I should be of my husband.

"Our wedding-day came. All the ships in the harbour were decked with flags, and the way to St. Andrew's Church was lined with bunting and flowers. The artillery and marine bands were sent out to play us home after the wedding, and altogether there was as much fuss made about my marriage as if I had been a little princess.

"My case was harder even than yours, I think you will admit, when I tell you that I went to the church, and waited at the altar-rails, with my string of twelve bridesmaids behind me, and my dear father by my side. We waited on and on for nearly an hour, and oh! the agony of that waiting. He never came. He never sent a word, beyond this letter, of explanation; and, can you believe it? the crowd who had assembled to cheer us, hooted and yelled at me as I was driven home.

"His leave of absence had been granted to him before in order that he might go on his wedding-tour, and that served him now. My father was too proud to attempt to stand in the way of his promotion, and he soon got another ship. I believe, at any rate, he never came back to Reymouth, and from that day till the one on

which you told me of your engagement, no one has ever mentioned his name to me.

"Soon after that awful day my father died, and a few months after that I lost the little fortune he had left me by the failure of the private bank in which it was funded. Then my relations began to look coldly upon me, and to continually urge me to marry impossible people; and so, after a short struggle with my own prejudices, I determined to leave all of the old behind me, and go to work on a lower rung of the ladder of life. So I came here, and the rest you know."

"We have each had a narrow escape from a madman!" Beatrice says, and there is a stirring ring in her tones which seems to promise that there will be no weak repining on her part about this calamity which has overtaken her.

The affectionate but retrospective-minded relations are not pleasant people to face while her wound is still fresh. Nevertheless, Beatrice faces them boldly, listens to all their conjectures with patience, and steers clear of annoying them in all respects, save this one, that she will neither utter nor listen to aught that sounds like reprobation or condemnation of her renegade lover.

"He is gone, and the rest shall be silence," she says good-temperedly, but she towers above them in her generosity and power of subduing her own pain as she says it, and they obey her, and soon cease conjecturing about him.

But though Beatrice can be reticent enough when she pleases, she does not please to be reticent about her friend Miss Mowbray's real status in social life. And so soon it comes to pass that the sweet-faced milliner of Bodmington is compelled to admit herself to be as much of a gentlewoman as any of her most aristocratic customers, and though she persists in keeping the shop which has resuscitated her fortunes, still her home is with Miss Alleyne at the Place.

At least it is her home for a time, but eventually Miss Mowbray buries her dead, and listens to wooing that is, if not as fond as was Guy Littleton's, unquestionably more faithful.

He is a good sort of man, this one whom she marries; a nice gentlemanly, sensible surgeon with a fair private property, and a good professional income. It is a drawback to unqualified satisfaction in the latter, that it is derived from his post as head of a private lunatic asylum.

But his private residence is out of ear-shot of the gruesome sounds, that are being poured forth, night and day, from that weary bourne to which the mentally unblessed are consigned. And the doctor's wife almost forgets the sad sights her husband must witness hourly in pursuit of his calling, so carefully is she kept apart from all that may pain and grieve her.

By-and-by, as a matter of course, Beatrice Alleyne comes to stay with her.

One night as they are dining, the servant brings a message to his master from the asylum; brings it with a superior pitying smile.

"You're sent for, sir; immediately, if you please, sir; the keepers can't manage Mr. Littleton any longer. He'll choke himself, they fear, unless you'll go and hear the defence he has prepared."

"It's a poor clever fellow, a man in my own profession, who was doing brilliantly in the naval service," Dr. Walters says in an explanatory way to his wife and her guest. "Such a nice fellow he is, too, but he has gone mad on the point of breach of promise of marriage; these things generally go the other way round; we conclude that he has been cruelly jilted, as he fancies he has jilted someone."

Hearing this they tell him their experiences—all they know of poor Guy Littleton. And this night two human guardian angels sit by the dying madman's bed, and are half recognised and wholly blessed by him.

IGNORANT FOLK.

"WHAT is the good of reading too much?" asked Louis le Grand. His majesty took care not to incur that reproach, never reading any book save his prayer-book, being as little inclined to the silent companionship of the kings of thought as the beautiful wearer of the purple of whom Victorien Sardou wrote, some twenty years ago: "She has evidently read but very little. I conversed with her last night, and really did not know what to talk about with her. Of literature she had no knowledge at all, and I believe she could not tell the century in which Corneille and Racine lived."

All things considered, Sardou had less reason for wonderment than the student whose bookseller proffered Bézique as a substitute for the Xenophon not to be found in his stock, or the American worshipper of the Swan of Avon, whose

friend guessed Shakespeare was something like parlour-croquet—a shot much wider of the mark than that of the policeman hailed by the poet Rogers in Fetter Lane with, “Can you tell me which is Dryden’s house?” who replied, “Dryden, Dryden? Is he backward with his rent?” for glorious John, likely enough, knew what it was to be in that predicament.

Many good people are woefully ignorant of dramatic literature. A lady, joining a party of friends, was told they were discussing the performance of Richard the Third at the Lyceum. “Ah,” said she, “we know the author very well; Mr. Wills, you know, who wrote Charles the First.” Equally at fault was a Pittsburgh actress, who, after examining the cast for King John posted up in the green-room, took her manager aback by demanding whose play it was, and learning it was by Shakespeare, exclaimed, “Good gracious! Has that man written another play?” When Charles Kean put the same play on his stage during the excitement created by the formation of Roman Catholic sees in England, some of the audience took offence at King John’s denunciation of papal pretensions and heartily hissed the obnoxious passages. Whether the malcontents thought the unpleasant sounds would grate on the author’s ears, it is impossible to say. It is not improbable, since a Gaiety audience showed their appreciation of Congreve’s *Love for Love*, on the first night of its revival in 1871, by calling for the author. Sophocles received the same compliment from the gods of the Dublin Theatre Royal, upon the production of an English version of *Antigone*, their clamour only being stilled by the manager appearing to explain that Sophocles was unable to bow his thanks, having unfortunately died two thousand years ago. Whereupon a voice from the upper regions cried: “Then chuck us out his mummy.”

When Thackeray visited Oxford to make arrangements for delivering his lectures on the Georges there, he had to wait upon the Vice-Chancellor to obtain his leave and license. After giving his name and explaining the object of his intrusion, the novelist had the pleasure of taking part in the following colloquy: “Have you ever written anything?” “Yes; I am the author of *Vanity Fair*.” “A Dissenter, I presume. Has *Vanity Fair* anything to do with John Bunyan’s work?” “Not exactly. I have also written *Pendennis*.” “Never heard of

those books, but no doubt they are proper works.” “I have also contributed to *Punch*.” “I have heard of *Punch*. It is, I fear, a ribald publication of some kind.” After such an experience, it did not shock the humorist to hear one waiter say to another: “That’s the celebrated Mr. Thackeray;” and, asked what the celebrated Mr. Thackeray had done, honestly own, “Blessed if I know!”

A temperance orator avowed himself convinced that, next to Beelzebub, Bacchus had brought more sin and misery on the human race than any other individual of whom the Scriptures gave any account; thereby tempting the uncharitable to infer that his knowledge of the Scriptures was on a par with that of the famous actress Champmésle, who could not understand Racine going to the Old Testament for a tragic subject when somebody had written a new one. Another Frenchwoman of the same period demurred to Baron’s assertion that a painting they were contemplating represented the sacrifice of Iphigenia, on the ground that M. Racine’s tragedy was not ten years old, whereas the picture had been in her family’s possession for more than a century.

General Nasimoff, sometime Inspector-in-Chief of the High Imperial Schools, was scarcely the right man in the right place, if a story told of him be true. Having to visit the University of Moscow in his official capacity, the college authorities sought to do him due honour, by specially decorating their great hall for his reception, and greeting him with an ovation. Hardly, however, had the Rector Magnificus commenced his speech, ere he was interrupted by the general remarking that he saw something which outraged his idea of orderliness, and made an extremely painful impression upon him as a soldier. Pointing to a dais in the centre of the hall, the inspector-in-chief went on: “You have set up his majesty’s bust in the middle of nine plaster casts. Is that your idea of symmetry? Could you not have made the number even?” The rector explained that the obnoxious figures were the Nine Muses, arranged in a semi-circle. “What?” exclaimed the irate general. “In the fiend’s name, let no man associate his majesty’s likeness with so idiotic an arrangement! Get another figure immediately, so that there may be five on each side. We must have proper order in these matters!” leaving the astonished rector no resource but to invent a tenth muse for that

occasion only. Ancient mythology was evidently not the forte of the martial school-inspector. Neither was it the forte of the Tyrolean peasant, who turned away from a photograph of Ranch's Three Graces, with the remark, "What fools women are! Those girls have not got money enough to buy themselves clothes, yet they spend the little they have in having their photograph taken!"

A nice crop of illustrations of ignorance might be gathered by a curiosity-monger who kept his ears open, at any popular art exhibition. At the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, a family party contemplated The Bridal of Neptune in great perplexity, until one of them, a smart Massachusetts girl, said, "It's either the deluge or the bursting of the Worcester Dam." "Tain't the deluge," remarked one of her companions, "'cause that ain't the costume of the period." "Then it's the Worcester Dam, sure," was the response as they moved on. At the same show a pair of country lassies stood admiring Altmann's copy of Paul Potter's masterpiece. Referring to her catalogue, one read, "The Young Bull, after Potter." "Yes," exclaimed the other. "There's the bull, but where's Potter?" "Oh," replied her friend, pointing to the figure of the herdsman, "there he is, behind the tree." More absurdly mistaken still were two fair ones much taken with a statuette of Andromeda, labelled, "executed in terra cotta." "Where is Terra Cotta?" queried one. Said her friend: "I'm sure I don't know, but I pity the poor girl, wherever it is."

Everybody has heard of the lady claiming the Dardanelles as her intimate friends, but few are aware that an English court of law perpetrated a similar blunder. Giving judgment in a case wherein several witnesses had deposed to the delivery of certain goods to Haidan Pacha, the court said that Haidan Pacha was undoubtedly a highly-paid official, having power to bind his government. In fact, Haidan Pacha was not a man at all, but a railway-station. In justice to Sir Barnes Peacock and Sir Robert Collier it must be stated that none of the counsel engaged in the case were in a position to set them right, the error only being discovered when the trial was reported in the newspapers. Nor did the bench get much assistance from the bar in a marine insurance case concerning a ship lost in Tub Harbour, Labrador, when the judge, reduced to ask the plaintiff's counsel where Labrador was, received the

reply, "Labrador, my lord, is the place where Tub Harbour is!" Lawyers know a great deal, but they do not know everything. Dick Barton, a witness in an important marine case, tried at Boston, in America, was cross-examined by Mr. Choate. Barton had stated that the night, on which the ship of which he was mate had come to grief, was dark as pitch, and raining like seven bells. "Was there any moon that night?" asked Choate. "Yes, sir; a full moon." "Did you see it?" "Not a mite." "Then how do you know there was a moon?" "Nautical Almanac said so." "And now tell me what latitude and longitude you crossed the equator in?" "You're joking?" "No, sir, I am in earnest, and I desire you to answer me." "I sha'n't." "You refuse to answer, do you?" "Yes, because I can't." "Indeed! You are chief mate of a clipper ship, and unable to answer so simple a question?" "Yes," said the puzzled seaman, "it's the simplest question I was ever asked in my life. I thought every fool of a lawyer knew there ain't no latitude on the equator!" Mr. Choate was satisfied, if no more pleased at being put right than was the Lancashire lad whose assertion that Napoleon Bonaparte was a cannibal, had poisoned the Pope, and shot three wives, being controverted by Mr. Sala, closed the discussion with: "Thee may think thyself a mighty clever lad, and thee may know a lot about Boneyparte, but I'll jump thee for two pound!"

Soon after the arrival of the welcome news from Waterloo, a Cornish squire, meeting some miners, thought to gratify their ears by the announcement that peace had come at last, but was dumbfounded by one of them replying, "I never heerd as there'd been war yet!" Such indifference regarding what is going on in the world is nothing uncommon. Codrington, a few days after his return home as victor of Navarino, was greeted by a country acquaintance with, "How are you, Codrington? I haven't seen you for some time. Had any shooting lately?" "Yes, I have had some remarkable shooting," said the admiral as he passed on his way. At the anxious time when war or peace depended upon America's answer to England's demand for the release of Messrs. Mason and Slidell, a gentleman going into the smoking-room of a Welsh hotel was astonished to find the company there, not only unaware of the existence of the envoys of the South, but actually ignorant

that there was any trouble at all in the States—an ignorance shared by the farmer who declined to subscribe to the Lancashire Relief Fund on the plea that Lancashire folk had no business to go to war with the Yankees.

M. Thiers one day entered a cottage near Caunterets, occupied by an old man named Pérélas, and enquired if he was not at the school of the Trois Frères with Thiers. "Thiers! Thiers!" echoed the cake-seller; "yes, I remember him, a very mischievous boy." "Well," said the great little man, "I am he." The statesman's old schoolmate, not at all disturbed, asked what he was doing. "Well," said the president, "I'm doing nothing just now, but for a long time I was minister." What sort of a minister the village Nestor supposed he had been, was shown by his replying: "Ah, you were a Protestant, weren't you?"

More excusable was the ignorance of the American whose ire against Lord Shaftesbury for denouncing slavery found vent in an absurd letter to its object, winding up with: "After all, a pretty fellow you are to set up as philanthropist! We should like to know where you were when Lord Ashley was fighting the battle of English slaves in coal-pit and factory. We never heard of you then!" Still better, or worse, was the blunder committed by a stump orator inveighing against the aristocracy for insisting upon managing public affairs, and invariably muddling matters. "Look at the Cape," said he; "General Thesiger was out there doing as well as a man could do, but he couldn't be left to finish the job, they must send out a lord. Lord Chelmsford is put over Thesiger's head, and see what a mess he has got us into!"

It would be interesting to know how many of the electors of the United Kingdom have any idea of what they mean when they dub themselves Liberal or Conservative. A vast number, we fancy, are no better informed than Stephen Noyes, the Stroud voter, who deposed that he only knew of two parties, the yellows and the blues; and, being a man who could not understand, was unable to say whether Mr. Disraeli was a yellow or a blue—in-deed, he had never heard that gentleman's name before. That of Mr. Gladstone was more familiar to him; he was a Liberal, he supposed. Pressed to give his notion of what Liberals were, he replied, "I think they be the best side of the party,"

under which impression he had doubtless cast his vote. Such political innocence is far more common than some people imagine.

We once interviewed an old voter in the Midlands who protested he was neither Liberal or Tory, blue or yellow; he was a cocked hat like his father and grandfather before him; but what a cocked hat might be, as to principles, was more than he or anyone else could tell us. He had seen a good many tough contests in his time, and with all his ignorance of political parties, was not so verdant as the three young fellows who once stood gazing at a placard at Wymondham, informing passers-by that the Norwich election had resulted thus:—

Tillett	:	:	:	:	5,877
Wilkinson	:	:	:	:	5,079
Majority	:	:	:	:	798

Said one: "That's about that election; there was only two on 'em got in tho'." "No," quoth the second, "that's all, the two top ones;" while the third, as he walked away, observed: "Old Majority didn't get many, did he?"

A traveller on the Ohio overheard an odd dispute between two boatmen. Said the first: "That was an awful winter, I tell you. The river was froze tight at Cincinnati, and the thermometer went down to twenty degrees below Cairo. 'Below which?' queried his puzzled mate. "Below Cairo, you lubberhead! You see, when it freezes at Cairo, it must be pretty cold; so they say so many degrees below Cairo." The unconvinced one replied: "No, they don't, you've got the wrong word, it's so many degrees below Nero. I don't know what it means, but that's what they say when it's dreadful cold."

An American amateur-scientist, loud in his praises of Professor Huxley, was brought up short by his audience of one enquiring what the professor had done. "Done," said he; "why made the important discovery about protoplasm." "And what the dickens is that?" "The life principle, the starting-point of vital action, so to speak." "He discovered that, did he? He knows all about the life principle, does he? Well, see here now, can he take some of that protoplasm, and go to work and make a man, a horse, an elephant, a gnat, or a fly with it?" "No!" "Well, then, he may go to thunder with his protoplasm; it's not worth ten cents a pound, anywhere. Appears to me these scientific fellows put on a lot of big airs about nothing. Protoplasm! shouldn't wonder

if Huxley came over to get up a company to work it. Is the mine in England?" The amateur-scientist gave it up.

Many years ago, a jilted lover drowned himself at Hartlepool. The jury that sat on the body were about to return a verdict of *felo-de-se*, when one among them objected, saying: "Nay, lads, nay, that wad niver do; iverybody knows he threw hissel intel Skerno, folks wad think us all fules!" Perhaps it was some such difficulty that impelled a member of the Rhode Island Legislature, to propose that all Latin words and phrases in the statutes should be rendered into plain English. The proposition was opposed by Mr. Updike on the ground that the people were not afraid of anything they understood.

There was a man in South Kingston who was a perfect nuisance, and nobody knew how to get rid of him. One day he was hoeing corn, and seeing the sheriff approaching with a paper, asked what he had got there? Now, if he had been told it was a writ, he would not have cared; but when the sheriff told him it was a *capias satisfaciendum*, he dropped his hoe and ran, and never more was heard of. M. Delaunay, the French actor, tried a similar experiment with like success. Leaving the theatre one night, with the manuscript of a play, called *Vercingetorix*, under his arm, he was stopped at the corner of the street by a fellow intent upon robbery. "You rascal!" exclaimed the actor. "If you are not off, I'll break my *Vercingetorix* over your head!" Without further parley, the thief fled.

THE QUESTION OF CAIN.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

CHAPTER XL. A FATHER'S LEGACY.

MR. HORNDEAN'S letter was punctually delivered by Frank Lisle to Beatrix, in time to prevent her from suffering from the hope deferred of his arrival, and he had told her to expect Frederick on the next day but one. So great was the pleasure, the enchantment which his letter caused her, that she rejoiced at her lover's absence, just for once, because it had procured her such intense enjoyment.

"I will keep this all my life," she said—for once unlike a woman who knew the world—and she had hidden it in her bosom as the merest romantic schoolgirl

might have done. The passion of it, the fervour of it, the assurance which it conveyed of her own supreme power over this man, thrilled and fascinated the beautiful woman as the spoken words of her lover's courtship had never yet done. There seemed to be in that letter a new departure for their love, and she revelled in the thought of the spell she had laid upon him.

There was this in common between her and Frederick, that day, that as he had never been so entirely held and absorbed by his love for her, so she had never before thoroughly understood it. If he could have stood beside her, as she murmured the words upon the paper to herself, and a flush of pride and pleasure suffused her face, he might have spoken out all the fulness of his heart; there would have been no more of that strange hard mockery in her manner which embarrassed him even when he was most happy.

"I shall know how to keep him to this," she said that night, as she smoothed out the letter, warm from its contact with her fair flesh, and laid it under the tray of her dressing-box. "Our marriage shall be no commonplace companionship. We shall be rich and happy—while it lasts."

She studied her face in the glass for a few minutes very attentively, and then, having noticed the moonlight upon the staircase, she drew back a window-curtain and looked out. The sky was clear, the moon was shining bright and steady, without an intervening cloud, turning the ugly ponderous houses opposite to silver, and sending a streak of its radiance into the street.

How beautiful the night must be at Horndean, thought Beatrix, who could see, in her mind's eye, the park, with its leafless trees, and the long line of the fine old house bathed in that silver radiance! Perhaps Frederick was looking out on the beautiful night just then, and thinking of her. What a pity it was that people who were rich and happy could not live ever so much longer!

She shivered slightly, and closed the curtain. After all, moonlight was chilly and melancholy—a stupid thing. There was nothing like sleep.

The following day, which was so bright at Horndean, was almost equally fine in London; a "pet day," indeed, and so pleasant, everyone said, within so short a time of Christmas.

The luxurious and well-ordered house in

Kaiser Crescent was bright and cheerful, and all the dwellers in it were in good spirits. Things had been going very well of late with Mr. Townley Gore. He had not had the gout, he had not had worries of any kind, and he had observed with pleasure that the relations between his wife and her future sister-in-law were of a satisfactory kind.

Beatrix would hold her own with Caroline, he thought, and things would be pleasant between the two households. Perhaps it was because Mr. Townley Gore was conscious that he himself did not always hold his own with his wife, who, although she never quarrelled with him, invariably had her own way, that he was so well pleased to find Beatrix a match (and more) for Caroline.

And then, there was something very agreeable in Frederick's new position. To have an impecunious and "troublesome" brother-in-law, with an objectionable habit of turning up in a scrape, converted into a gentleman of estate with a stake in all the proprieties, and seemingly none but virtuous inclinations, is a source of satisfaction which all the world can appreciate; and Mr. Townley Gore liked very much indeed the enjoyment Horndean had to offer, with no trouble and nothing to pay. He admired Beatrix, too, and felt sure that they should always get on very well together.

Beatrix rather liked Mr. Townley Gore. He was selfish and heartless, no doubt, though less so than his wife; but selfishness and heartlessness were to her mere words, like those which expressed their opposites. Those characteristics did not affect his manners, or lessen the amusement she derived from his fluent and "knowing" talk—that of a thorough man of the world—and as she should never allow them to interfere with her comfort or her plans in any way, they could not possibly matter to her.

Mrs. Townley Gore was in the serenest spirits; her ticklish position with Frederick was becoming easier and more assured every day. She had asked him a question about the intended settlements, he had answered her briefly that there were to be none. She had replied that Beatrix was quite charmingly romantic, while secretly wondering that she should be such a fool, and the incident had ended without the slightest strain of their fraternal relations.

There were probably not to be found in all London on that bright morning three

more contented persons than Mr. and Mrs. Townley Gore and Beatrix, as they discussed after breakfast their respective plans for the day.

How handsome and how happy Beatrix looked, in her dainty morning dress, as she leaned back in her chair, fingering with a caressing touch the blossoms of a splendid bouquet (Frederick, in foreign fashion, sent her one as a love-message, every morning), and talking gaily.

The ladies' day was well filled. The morning was to be devoted to shopping; in the afternoon they were to have an inspection of the costumes for the fancy ball, and after an early dinner they were going, with friends, to the play. Mr. Townley Gore was to dine with some men at a club, on his return from a short run into Surrey to look at a pair of horses with a friend, so that he was as well pleased as were his wife and Miss Chevenix.

When Beatrix was ready to go out, and the carriage was at the door, she lingered in her room for a few minutes to glance once more over Frederick's letter, and she pulled some leaves from a rare flower in the bouquet of that morning, and placed them with it in her dressing-box. No doubt he would have written to her again last night; and she should have his letter before she went to the play. That would be delightful; she would enjoy *The Bells* all the more.

The programme of the morning was carried out exactly, and nothing occurred to ruffle the contentment of the two ladies. They returned to Kaiser Crescent to luncheon, and it was then that the first trifling contrariety of the day presented itself. Beatrix had sent her maid to Mrs. Mabberley's house for something that she wanted, and she was now told that the messenger had returned, having failed to gain admittance. Thinking, as the young woman was a stranger, she had made some mistake, Beatrix questioned her. There was no mistake. The maid had gone in a cab to the right number in Hill Street; there she had knocked and rung several times, but without effect. At last a policeman appeared, and he, too, knocked and rang at the door, equally in vain. After some time a woman came up the area steps of the adjoining house, and told the policeman that "it was no good for him to go on knocking, for there was no one there." On being questioned further, she said the servants had all left the house on the previous evening, and "the lady" early in

the morning. The policeman remarked that it was a "queer start" to leave the house quite empty, to which the woman replied that very likely a charwoman had been left in charge, and that she had gone out, taking the back-door key with her, "as," she added, "a many of 'em will, and leave the 'ouse to look after itself for hours and hours; as you plicemen knows right well." The policeman acknowledged that similar breaches of faith had come within his ken, and opining that it was quite impossible to say when the charwoman might return, he advised the puzzled abigail to go home, and come again, later, on chance. Then, without taking any notice of the remark of the woman upon the area steps, "which, mind you, I don't say positive as there is a charwoman, for I haven't seen none," he smote his gloves together, and resumed his stolid walk.

Mrs. Townley Gore and Beatrix heard this account of the maid's unsuccessful mission with much surprise. They were totally at a loss to imagine what could have induced Mrs. Mabberley to leave home in this sudden way, and especially to have sent away her servants in the first instance.

The whole thing was inconsistent with all that had passed during her interview with Beatrix. Was she the sort of person, Mrs. Townley Gore asked, to get into a rage with her whole household on discovering some delinquency, and turn them all out of the house? Beatrix could not tell. She could only say that her belief was, whatsoever Mrs. Mabberley chose to do she would do.

"But then," she added, "that would not account for her going away herself, and going without letting me know. I arranged with her that I was to return to Hill Street on Saturday, and she asked me to invite Frederick to dine with us. It is a mystery. But no doubt she will write to explain. It will be very awkward for me if she remains away beyond Saturday."

"Why should it be awkward for you, dear Beatrix?" said Mrs. Townley Gore. "You don't want to be told, I hope, that this house is much more your home than Mrs. Mabberley's?"

The afternoon passed, as the morning had done, according to the plan arranged. The modiste arrived with the dresses for the fancy ball, the Marguerite de Valois costume for Mrs. Townley Gore—with the famous pockets for the dried hearts of the lovers of that princess faithfully repro-

duced—and the Hungarian costume for Miss Chevenix. Both were eminently satisfactory—rich, correct, and becoming.

The modiste was anxious about the ornaments to be worn with the Hungarian dress; but Beatrix could reassure her. They would be quite right; and, in fact, Frank Lisle had told her, when he called yesterday, that he had succeeded in procuring all that would be necessary.

It was not until she was dressing for the early dinner that was to precede the play, that Beatrix had leisure to think again of the oddity of Mrs. Mabberley's proceedings. Could she be mad? To form such an idea of the most quiet, methodical, repressed, insignificant of women, one whose voice was never raised, whose demeanour was never fluttered by an emotion, seemed the height of absurdity. And yet Beatrix did entertain it. No living creature except herself and Mrs. Mabberley knew what the compact between them had been, and for the making of that compact Beatrix had never been able to discern the motive. What if it had been mere madness? What if Mrs. Mabberley were only one of the many unsuspected maniacs, gifted with plausibility, who are out and about in the world? It gave her a shudder to think that such a thing was possible, that she might have been living for so long in daily contact with a madwoman, and then that was succeeded by a thrill of joy, deeper perhaps than she had ever felt before, at the thought of the release that was imminent and the brilliant future that was opening before her.

Beautifully dressed, in high spirits; though a little put out because no letter from Frederick came by the afternoon's post; Beatrix, carrying her lover's morning gift of flowers, took her place in the carriage beside Mrs. Townley Gore, and was taken to the Lyceum Theatre. Their friends had just arrived; their box was one of the best in the house; Mr. Irving threw into his performance of the part of Mathias all the weird power that has made the conscience-slain murderer one of the most memorable impersonations ever seen on any stage; the whole party looked and listened with fascinated attention. Neither Mrs. Townley Gore or Beatrix was at all likely to be unconscious of notice; on ordinary occasions each of them would have been well aware that the glasses of observers opposite were turned upon her, and that she was the subject of comment; but

it did happen this evening that neither observed those facts. For once, they were both, and equally, taken up with the play and the acting. It was fortunate for Mrs. Townley Gore's good name in the world of fashion, that attention and "earnestness" at the Lyceum are the correct thing, for there was some whispered comment about her and her companion in the boxes opposite, and in the orchestra stalls. Men left their places and talked together in doorways, and a few kindly women's faces bore an expression of concern and compassion. This was, however, quite late, after the news in the latest editions of the evening papers would have had time to reach the theatres, and it did not attract the attention of either Mrs. Townley Gore or Beatrix. Afterwards, Mrs. Townley Gore remembered that they had got their carriage up with surprising celerity, and that there had been unusual attention paid to them by the attendants; but at the time this passed unnoticed, as did the facts that although it was her own footman who stood at the door of the carriage, the seat beside the coachman was occupied by a stranger, and that the footman followed in a cab. As the carriage rolled away, some people standing in the doorway of the theatre looked at each other with a kind of horror in their faces, and one of the men said to a lady: "There is his sister, and Miss Chevenix is with her. They evidently know nothing about it."

The carriage stopped, the ladies alighted and passed into the house, followed, without their knowledge, by the man who had taken the footman's place upon the coach-box. The instant Mrs. Townley Gore entered the well-warmed, well-lighted, crimson-carpeted hall, she felt that something was wrong. There was calamity in the atmosphere. The knowledge of it was in the pale face of the servant, who advanced, and said that Mr. Townley Gore begged she would go to him at once in the library. It was not her husband then? She drew her breath more freely, but cast a startled glance at Beatrix, who had gone at once to the table, and was looking over the evening's letters in the hope of finding one from Frederick.

"Don't take Miss Chevenix with you, ma'am," whispered the servant, as he removed Mrs. Townley Gore's cloak; and without a word she crossed the hall, and entered the library.

With indescribable terror she saw her

husband rise and then reseal himself unable to advance to her, and cover his face with his hands. It was with a sickening sense of fear that she saw that there were four persons with him: Frank Lisle, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Warrender, and a stranger. The latter was a grave stern-looking person, of official aspect, and he was standing very upright by the side of Mr. Warrender.

"For God's sake, what is it?" said Mrs. Townley Gore, leaning back against the door, as Frank Lisle and Mr. Warrender came towards her. "Tell me at once; don't torture me. Is Frederick dead?"

"He is dead!"

It was Mr. Warrender who spoke; and while she breathed hard, with the gasps which are the first effect of a great shock, he placed her gently in a chair, and begged her to calm and strengthen herself to learn what they had to tell her. All this time the stranger observed the scene in an unchanged attitude, and with an unmoved face.

In a few minutes Mrs. Townley Gore was able to hear the story they had come to tell her; and she listened to it as we all listen to dreadful news, with the double feeling that it is unreal and impossible, and yet that, even while the words that convey it are being spoken, every one of the possibilities of anguish that are contained in it is present to us in all its details. She was very still, and she listened in silence as Frank Lisle broke to her the terrible truth that her brother's sudden death was not natural, but inflicted by a murderer's hand. They were all relieved when her tears came, as Frank, himself in dreadful agitation, related the capture of the murderer, red-handed; how at daybreak they had taken him to the nearest town, and charged him before the local magistrate, Mr. Osborne, with the crime. The wretch, they added, was in prison, and had made a very important statement.

It was at this moment that Mrs. Townley Gore bethought herself of Beatrix.

"Ah, that unhappy girl!" she cried. "She does not know it yet, and who is to tell her? You must," addressing her husband; "I could not." Then she started up excitedly. "If the servants know, it may reach her unawares. Pray, pray go to her."

"Don't be alarmed," said Mr. Townley Gore, "the servants have received strict orders," and here he glanced at the stranger, who nodded curtly. "Nothing

will reach her; but, my dearest Caroline, there is more ill news to come, and we cannot spare you the hearing of it. Tell her, Lisle, and make an end of it, for pity's sake."

Then they told her that the thief and murderer, finding the game was up, had volunteered a statement which was of terrible import to Miss Chevenix. This man, James Ramsden (to whose identity the police had just gained a clue, and who was to have left the country and joined his confederates, the pretended colonel and Mrs. Ramsden (they were not his parents) abroad, after the final coup of the robbery at Horndean, acknowledged that he had stolen the Duchess of Derwent's diamonds and Lady Vane's jewels. He also declared that his confederate on those two occasions, and also in the projected jewel robbery at Horndean, was Miss Chevenix.

To Mrs. Townley Gore's exclamation of horror and incredulity, and her eager question: "You surely do not believe this monstrous lie?" no one answered with the denial she expected; and, as she looked from one to the other, with starting eyes and a face of ghastly pallor, she saw that they did believe it.

"The story," said Mr. Osborne, "is, unfortunately, as consistent as it is terrible. That Miss Chevenix is an adventuress is, I fear, beyond a doubt; the questions which we have put to Mr. Townley Gore have satisfied us of that; and the circumstances tell strongly against her. The Duchess of Derwent exhibited her diamonds to her, showed her where she kept them, and this man states that from Miss Chevenix's hands he received the key of the jewel-case, and that she furnished him with instructions how to reach the duchess's dressing-room, and removed the fastenings of the windows. The robbery was successfully perpetrated after Miss Chevenix left the house, and the proceeds were shared with her, at her own former residence in Chesterfield Street, which she had ostensibly let to the confederates. The robbery of Lady Vane's jewels was then arranged; and Miss Chevenix went on a visit to Temple Vane. The robbery would have been effected in the same way as at Derwent Castle, only that the easier method of the substitution of dummy jewel-cases was suggested by Miss Chevenix, when she found that Lady Vane was about to take her jewels to London. This man had been introduced into the house, and made

acquainted with all the localities by Miss Chevenix; when the plan was changed, the substitution was effected by her, and the jewels were handed over by her to him, at the railway-station, as he passed her on the platform, with a half-open travelling-bag in his hand."

"That at least is impossible," said Mrs. Townley Gore, "for her own pearls were stolen on the same occasion."

"So Mr. Lisle remarked to the man," said Mr. Osborne, "but he replied that the loss of the pearls was a blind. Miss Chevenix was at a loss for money to carry on her deceptive position until she could marry, and had made up her mind to sell her pearls. They also were in this man's possession, and he sold them, and she had the money, together with her share of the spoil of Lady Vane. I fear there is no way out of this explanation."

Mrs. Townley Gore answered only by a groan.

"The Horndean robbery," continued Mr. Osborne, "was to have been the next, and it was expected to be a very rich haul. The man came down in the disguise of an organ-grinder; it was to that disguise the police got the clue; and he picked up all the necessary information. Miss Chevenix got at the keys of the collection, and at the window fastenings, just as she had done in the other instances."

"But it was all to be her own. Why should she rob herself?"

"Because she would have been denounced as an adventuress to you and your brother, if she had hesitated; and she could not have retaliated without avowing her own guilt. She did struggle and protest, but in vain; she had to submit. This was to be the last of the series of crimes. The elder confederates had cleared off with their gains—very considerable, no doubt, for Miss Chevenix was not the only tool they worked with—and Miss Chevenix was to be free from her associates."

"But how, then, did it—did this awful—did the crime occur, if she—if my brother's affianced wife"—Mrs. Townley Gore shuddered from head to foot as she uttered these words—"knew?"

"Mr. Lisle asked that question also; but there was an answer to it. Miss Chevenix did not know. When this villain found her manageable on the point of the robbery at Horndean by threats only, he left her in ignorance; he refused to tell her when he intended to act upon the

information which she had supplied. He knew nothing, so he states, and I am inclined to believe him, of Mr. Horndean's intention to come to Horndean, and he declares that he had no idea Mr. Horndean was in the house when he entered it with the purpose of committing the robbery."

"What is to become of this wretched girl?" was the first utterance of Mrs. Townley Gore, when Mr. Osborne paused. She was wonderfully calm and collected. Probably the very greatness of the shock had steadied her. "Who knows of this? Is it public property yet?"

"The murder only," answered the stranger, speaking for the first time. "That was in the evening papers."

Then Mrs. Townley Gore recalled, as if in a dream, the ease of their exit from the Lyceum Theatre, and the looks and whispers of the group in the doorway. And now the stranger struck in, with such effect that all the others subsided into the background, and Mrs. Townley Gore had a horrid consciousness that he was taking possession of her and her house, and all that was in it.

"I am Inspector Simms, of the Metropolitan Police," said the stern stranger, "and I hold a warrant, granted by Sir Gregory Grogan, for the arrest of Miss Chevenix. Mr. Osborne came up to town with these gentlemen; they got the warrant, and they communicated with Mr. Townley Gore, and here we are—I and an officer. He came back with you and the young lady from the theatre; he's in the hall now, and it's our painful duty to apprehend Miss Chevenix, here and now."

"In our house?"

"Yes, madam, in your house; and I'm sorry to say, when there's such family trouble about, the sooner the better. There's a cab waiting."

"You don't mean to say," remonstrated Mr. Townley Gore, "that you will take her away to-night? She has to be told that her affianced husband has been murdered, and that she herself is denounced by his murderer as an adventuress and a thief. You are surely not bound to remove her from my house? Take any precautions you will against her escape; I will aid them to the best of my ability; but let her remain here until to-morrow. All this may be capable of an explanation compatible with her innocence."

"It may, sir, and I do not say it is not. We are used to stranger stories than this. From what I understand, this Ramsden's

record is a precious bad one; but duty's duty. I must act on this warrant"—he produced the paper—"and it's getting late. The question is, which of you gentlemen will come with me and break it to the party?"

So far as Mr. Townley Gore was concerned, the inspector's question was answered on the instant, for, with a deep sigh, Mrs. Townley Gore fell from her chair in a dead faint, and he was fully occupied with her. After a hurried consultation, Mr. Osborne and Mr. Warrender left the room with the inspector, and passing through the hall, where the other policeman in plain clothes was on duty, they went upstairs, preceded by the frightened butler, who was told to call Miss Chevenix's maid into the passage to speak with them.

Beatrice, vexed at finding no letter from Frederick, and wondering at the delay of a summons to the pleasant little supper with which Mrs. Townley Gore always wound up an evening at the play, was sitting by the fire, thinking, now of Frederick, again of The Bells, and anon of Mrs. Mabberley's odd freak. She was tired, hungry, and impatient, but still she was very happy. Presently she set her dressing-box upon a velvet table by the fireside, and took out the precious letter. She might have time to read it once again before the gong sounded. How sweet it smelt, with the scent of the fragrant leaves about it! As she lay back in her chair, her queenly head with its red gold crown of plaited hair against the embroidered cushion, the gleam of jewels on her fair neck and strong white arms, the blended light of wood-fire and wax candles playing on her rich dress of cream-coloured satin, she presented a perfect picture of beauty, ease, and luxuriousness. Who could have believed that the hour had struck, the fiat gone forth? A mild knock at the door of the adjoining dressing-room, to which her maid responded, did not even attract her attention. That was all for her lover's letter, as she dwelt upon it, with long sighs of happiness. She looked up at the hurried entrance of her maid, and seeing three strangers in the doorway, rose, laid the crumpled paper back in the box, closed the lid, and asked them who they were, and what their business was with her?

Frederick was dead! The man whom she had hated and defied had killed him! It was all over! Only a few minutes ago she was the happiest of

women. What was she now? The most wretched. Accused of crimes which she hardly comprehended, beyond seeing that there was no way of clearing herself from the imputation of them, had she even cared to do so; a beggar, an outcast, the most lost, ruined, forlorn wretch upon the surface of the earth soon to cover him whose hand, two days ago, had written the words that had made her heart burn within her. What did she care for any of these things, beyond the first of them! Frederick was dead! She had loved him, and now there was no such thing. She gave no thought to his sister, or to the world; the void was too utter for gradation, the ruin was too complete for stages. The dignity and composure with which she met the statement made to her by Mr. Osborne (with a due warning on the part of the inspector that she should not say anything to her own injury), made a profound impression upon the beholders.

"I have done none of these things," she said; "I don't know what you mean."

And then she left them all there in her thoughts, as matters of no account. Frederick was dead!

The inspector told her maid that she might put up a few necessaries for the use of Miss Chevenix, and he withdrew into the passage while a morning dress was being substituted for her evening attire. Through all this she was perfectly passive. Frederick was dead! All was over! She was at the foot of the wall, and facing her was the blank of nothingness.

When the gentlemen were readmitted, Mr. Osborne said to her:

"I trust that you will seek consolation in God, and that He will establish your innocence."

"You are very good, sir," was her dreary answer, "but there is no God, and my innocence does not matter to me, or to anyone left alive."

Then the good clergyman shrank away, and went to the library, and cowered there, with Mr. and Mrs. Townley Gore, waiting, with a sickening dread, for the sound of footsteps in the hall, and the departure of the wretched woman into the outer darkness.

Mrs. Townley Gore had offered, had even tried, to go to her, but she was quite unable, and Beatrix had merely said:

"See her? No. Why should I? I do not want to see anyone any more."

Only Mr. Warrender, whose gentleness and compassion could not be surpassed, and the inspector, who had never met with anything like this before, were with Beatrix, when her maid said that she was "ready." She had not asked whither they were going to take her. She was quite lost in thought, and she had not shed a tear. Her eyes burned with a feverish brilliancy, her complexion varied from a crimson flush to a waxen paleness, her hands were icy cold, and the nails were blue, but she stood steadily upon her feet, and no tears came.

When all was done, she calmly asked the inspector, "May I take some papers out of my dressing-case—only a letter or two?" He told her she might, and she quietly resumed her seat, drew the velvet table close to her, and raised the lid of the box. The letter lay on the top, but she shifted the tray, and bending her head so that it was hidden for an instant, seemed to search for something under it. The next moment she leaned back, with Frederick's letter spread out in her hand, and pressed it passionately to her lips; the action concealing her face completely. Then her hand closed and dropped, a few flower-petals fluttered to the floor, and the inspector and Mr. Warrender saw that her eyes were shut. They waited for a little, after which the inspector said, "We must go." At the same instant there was a faint sound, like the click of a lock, and the closed eyes slowly opened. The two men rushed to the side of Beatrix, but she had eluded their vigilance. The poison of which she had spoken to Mrs. Mabblerley as her father's "legacy," had furnished her with the means.

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SUM ASSURED . . .	<u>£19,000,000</u>
ANNUAL REVENUE .	<u>£800,000</u>

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LONDON: 83 KING WILLIAM STREET, E.C., & 3 PALL MALL EAST, S.W.

DUBLIN: 66 UPPER SACKVILLE STREET. GLASGOW: 155 WEST GEORGE STREET.

MANCHESTER: 61 KING STREET. NEWCASTLE: 53 GREY STREET.

CALCUTTA: 4 COUNCIL HOUSE STREET. BOMBAY: 12 RAMPART ROW.

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THE STANDARD LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY

THE DIRECTORS beg to direct special attention to the Company's
SECURED PAYMENT SYSTEM.

Under this Table, if a Policy is taken by *eleven* yearly payments, each payment after the first secures absolutely one-tenth part of the sum assured, in the event of no further premiums being paid; and if the Policy is taken by *twenty-two* yearly payments, each payment after the second similarly secures one-twentieth part of the sum assured; the whole sum being payable at death from the commencement so long as the premiums are regularly met.

Premiums can also be paid Half-yearly.

SECURED PAYMENT POLICIES.
RATES for Assurance of £100, to be paid on the
Death of the person Assured.

Age at birth	Premiums payable for 11 years only.		Premiums payable for 22 years only.		Age at birth	Premiums payable for 11 years only.		Premiums payable for 22 years only.	
	<i>f.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>d.</i>		<i>f.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>d.</i>
20	3	15	8	2	6	11	31	4	10
21	3	17	0	2	7	10	31	4	12
22	3	18	5	2	8	9	32	4	14
23	3	19	0	2	9	8	33	4	16
24	4	1	4	2	10	8	34	4	17
25	4	2	10	2	11	8	35	4	19
26	4	2	12	8	36	5	4	19	3
27	4	5	11	13	37	5	3	18	3
28	4	7	6	2	14	10	38	5	5
29	4	9	2	15	11	40	5	9	10

NORTH BRITISH & MERCANTILE INSURANCE COMPANY

ESTABLISHED

Incorporated
by Royal Charter



A.D. 1809.

And
Acts of Parliament.

CHIEF OFFICES:

EDINBURGH: 64 PRINCES STREET. LONDON: 61 THREADNEEDLE STREET.

RESOURCES OF THE COMPANY

As at 31st December 1880.

I. SUBSCRIBED CAPITAL—

PAID-UP	£500,000
UNCALLED	1,500,000

£2,000,000

II. FIRE FUND—

RESERVE	£844,577
PREMIUM RESERVE	317,058
BALANCE of Profit and Loss Account	39,608

£1,201,243

III. LIFE FUND—

ACCUMULATED FUND (Life Branch)	£3,028,833
Do. do. (Annuity Branch)	351,274

£3,380,107

IV. REVENUE FOR YEAR 1880—

NETT LIFE PREMIUMS and INTEREST	£450,675
ANNUITY PREMIUMS and INTEREST	13,725

£464,400

NETT FIRE PREMIUMS and INTEREST	1,013,900
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£1,478,300

NORTH BRITISH & MERCANTILE INSURANCE COMPANY.

Life Assurance Branch.

To the Assured with Profits this Office presents the peculiar feature of combining the advantages of a Mutual Office, with the great additional security offered by a large and influential Proprietary.

NINE-TENTHS of the Whole Profits of the Life Assurance Branch belong to the Assured, one-tenth only going to the Shareholders. The last Division of Profits took place as at 31st December 1880, when a Bonus of £1:7:6 per cent per annum on the Sums Assured and previous Bonus Additions, not surrendered, was declared to those who are assured with Profits,—the total sum allocated during the Quinquennium, by way of Bonus among Policyholders, amounting to £300,065.

Policies on the Participating Scale, effected on or before 31st December next, will share, at 31st December 1885, in the Division of Profits then to be made, and will have this advantage over subsequent Policies, that they will receive an additional Bonus for the premium paid during the current year, and at each succeeding Quinquennium they will rank for an additional Bonus on the Bonus to be from time to time declared.

The attention of intending Assurers is invited to the various Schemes which have been matured by the Directors, with the object of meeting the convenience of the Public and their varying requirements:—

1. Insurance by Yearly, Half-Yearly, or Quarterly Payments during the whole period of life.

This Scheme is for those who are able now, and who anticipate* that they will continue to be able to pay during life the calculated rate of Premium at present age sufficient to insure the sum in the Policy.

2. Insurance if death shall occur within any given period.

This Scheme is for those who desire to provide, at as low a rate as possible, for the contingency of death within a given period.

3 Half-Premium System.

Under this Table the Premiums for the first five years are about one-half of those payable under Scheme I., while those for the remainder of life are slightly higher.

NORTH BRITISH & MERCANTILE INSURANCE COMPANY.

The advantages of this Scheme are, that the Assured gets all the benefit of taking out a Policy in early life, while health is unimpaired, at a low rate, and so escapes the weight of heavy Premiums during that period when he may be least able to pay them.

4. Terminable Premiums.

By this Scheme the Sum Assured is payable at death, but payment of the Premium ceases in 10, 15, 20, or 25 years, as the Insured may prefer.

This Scheme is for those who, in the active years of life, are able to pay a large Premium, whereby they escape all burden in the later years of life. Policies effected under it possess special Non-Forfeitable advantages, inasmuch as in the event of the Premium being unpaid they remain in full force for such a proportion of the sum assured as the number of Premiums paid bears to the number stipulated for. A Policyholder may thus, at any moment, know the precise amount for which he is assured without further payment. These Policies are, in every respect, non-forfeitable, and afford absolute security to the Assured for a sum proportional to the number of Premiums paid.

The attention of intending Assurers is specially invited to this Scheme.

5. Annual Premium until the Attainment of a Specified Age

for the Assurance of a sum payable to the Insured on attaining that age, or to his representatives or assignees at his death, if that happen earlier than the specified age.

This system presents the advantage of enabling a man to provide at once for his own old age, or for his heirs if he should fail to reach that age.

6. Annual Premiums for Assurance of £100 on Two Joint Lives—the money to be payable at the death of the first that fails.

This Scheme is useful for partners in trade; and it also provides for the case of those who may be able to afford mutual support during Life—the income of the survivor, however, being insufficient for himself alone.

One-half of the Premiums for the first five years, or one-third of the Premiums for the first five, seven, or ten years, on a Policy effected under the Whole Life (with Profits) or Endowment Assurance Tables, may, in certain cases, remain unpaid and form a debt upon the Policy, provided interest thereon at 5 per cent be regularly paid in advance. This debt may be paid off at any time the Assured may find convenient.

The Company grants Insurances on the lives of Persons Abroad, or about to proceed Abroad, at Moderate Rates. Separate Tables have been prepared for residents in India and China, and these form an attractive feature in the Company's Business.

NORTH BRITISH & MERCANTILE INSURANCE COMPANY.

BESIDES INSURANCES ON ALL THE FOREGOING SYSTEMS
THE COMPANY PROVIDES

ENDOWMENTS FOR CHILDREN.

These Endowments may be effected on any of the following Systems :—

1. By Single or Annual Premium for a sum payable on a Child attaining a certain age, Annual Premium to cease on death of the Child, or his attainment of the age.
2. By Single or Annual Premium for a sum payable on a Child attaining a certain age, but if the Child die before attaining that age, *all the Premiums to be returned to the Parent.*
3. By Annual Premium without return, the payments of Premium to *cease* on the death of either the *Parent or Child.*
4. By Annual Premium, the payments to cease on the death of either Parent or Child, all the Premiums being *returnable* should the Child not attain the age specified.

Annuity Branch.

The Company grants Annuities to Persons of all Ages on very favourable terms :—

1. Immediate Annuities, payable yearly, half-yearly, or quarterly.
2. Deferred Annuities, to commence after the expiry of any number of years ; and either with or without return of premiums in the event of death before attainment of the age selected for commencement of the Annuity.
3. Survivorship Annuities to commence after the failure of one or more lives, and either with or without return of Premiums.

Fire Department.

The Company was established as a Fire Office in 1809.
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The Company's Prospectus and Tables of Premiums can be obtained on application at the Offices of the Company, or at any of the Branches or Agencies.

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GLASGOW—102 St. Vincent Street.
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BIRMINGHAM—Unity Buildings, Temple St.
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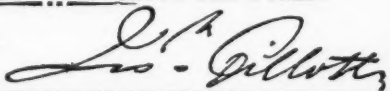
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